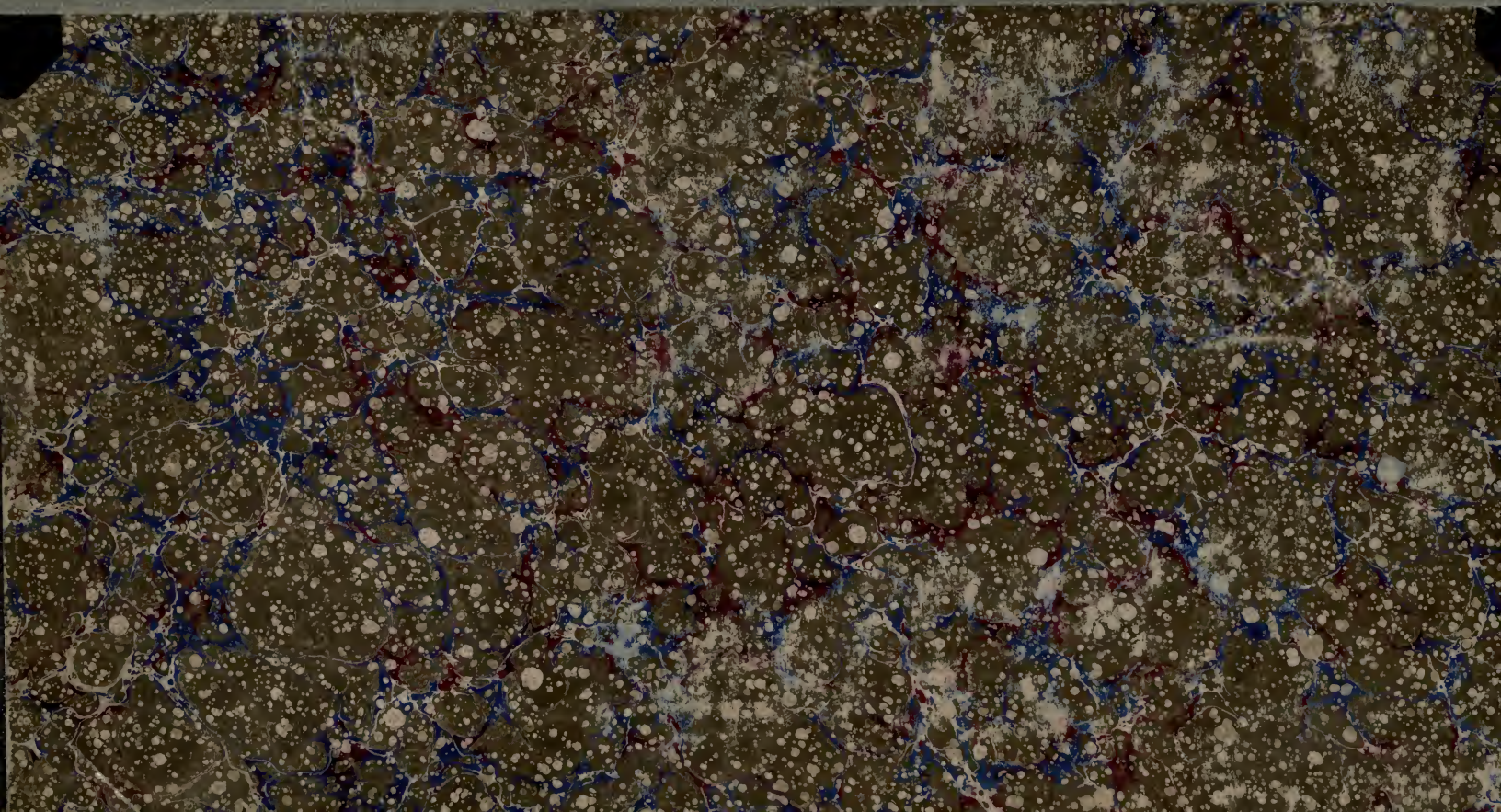
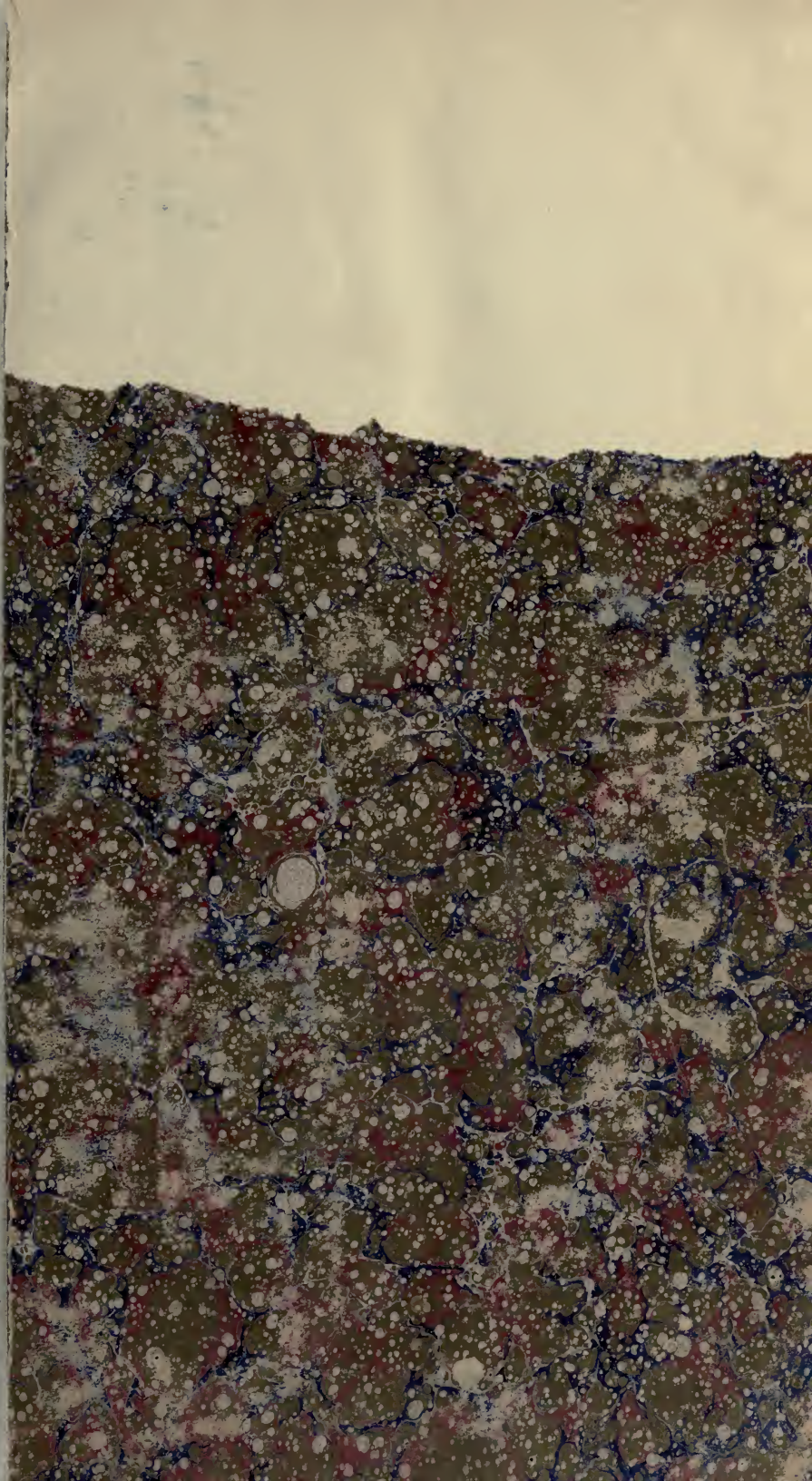
YD 22517





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/universityextens00skidrich

# UNIVERSITY EXTENSION.

WAGNER INSTITUTE CENTRE
OF THE
nerican Society for the Extension
OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING.

BY

SYDNEY T. SKIDMORE, M.A.,

PROFESSOR OF PHYSICS, PHILADELPHIA NORMAL SCHOOL.

(*Reprinted, by permission, from Lippincott's Magazine for October, 1890.*)

PUBLISHED BY

PHILADELPHIA SOCIETY FOR THE EXTENSION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING,

1600 CHESTNUT STREET, PHILADELPHIA.

# UNIVERSITY EXTENSION.

BY

SYDNEY T. SKIDMORE, M.A.,

PROFESSOR OF PHYSICS, PHILADELPHIA NORMAL SCHOOL.

---

(*Reprinted, by permission, from Lippincott's Magazine for October, 1890.*)

---

PUBLISHED BY

PHILADELPHIA SOCIETY FOR THE EXTENSION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING,

1600 CHESTNUT STREET, PHILADELPHIA.

## *UNIVERSITY EXTENSION.*

THE public-school system in our country is a university in a broad but, thus far, not in a high sense of the term. While including everybody, it has not risen above its "trivium," or first story of the university structure; whatever there is higher than that is of alien architecture and not unaptly represented by a few Gothic spires on the roof of a huge industrial establishment. The method and form of the higher progress, as yet, belong to a system very different from public schools,—were the outgrowths of other needs in by-gone years, and, while well adapted, then and now, to the special requirements which created them, are not in harmony with universal education and can never become its lofty halls.

The universities arose as mediævalism declined. In the seclusion of scholastic life, and holding common labors in high contempt, their students were prepared for intellectual leadership or elegant leisure. They have given to European empire its learned professions and have created its national literatures; they have conferred omnipotent benefits *upon* all classes, but when the point is reached where higher culture is to be formed *within* all classes it is not to the university of the past or the present that we can look.

The possibilities of the university idea, and of all higher education administered by its methods, were realized when the supply of professional men became ample for the needs of civilization. To make men and women powerful in other pursuits was not its mission. For their purpose it has ever been in spirit unsympathetic, in methods unsuited, in arrangements ill adapted. The need of a higher education of another order and differently administered has become continually more evident, and the lack of it now stands side by side with other great facts which, taken together, indicate that we are upon the verge of another evolutionary epoch, if indeed we are not already caught in its great whirls.

What the Academy, Serapion, and Athenæum were to the age of dialectics, or the ecclesiastical schools to the age of faith, the university has been to the age of reason. Just as the two former respectively flowed into, but did not define, the education of the age succeeding each, so we may reasonably conclude that in the age of economics now dawning, higher education will not be shaped exclusively, nor principally, by the scholastic scheme. The incompatibility of that scheme with industrial pursuits, and the possibility of an education of the highest order leading to other results than polite inanities and expensive tastes, are growing convictions. In our humble opinion, that education is highest, at all times, which shapes human faculties unto the most successful combat with their environment, and gives to the mind a regnancy over the forces and materials with which it has to do. In times when intelligence endows every life, it is not sufficient that the thrones of culture be held by the conventionalities of learning and

decorated with a tinsel of brilliant conceits. True, among men this has had an effectiveness all its own, and still has in a diminished degree, but it must lessen as the individualism of the majority becomes more and more ennobled, and we may safely predict that much now termed higher education will, to no distant generation, appear beggarly when compared with those beautiful fabrics of truth from the looms of God, with which the mind may clothe itself.

Higher education is no longer restricted to the few; that has passed, as the time has long passed when but few could afford to have light in their dwellings, or dwellings fit to be illuminated. In the future, the masses must be educated beyond the three R's, for the number of pursuits requiring trained perceptions and extensive knowledge has increased from a few select professions to hundreds. How is this education to be achieved? I answer, Not by the scholastic scheme, with its university uppermost and its stalactitic appendages of college and high school. This statement is based on two reasons:

First, the study of abstract truth and intellectual formulæ, as a sole occupation, sublimates the fancy and creates in the manual worker a distaste for his future, instead of stimulating him to it.

Second, the scholastic scheme makes it impossible for the worker to co-ordinate his industrial with his intellectual training, when his proper development and personal necessities both require that they should proceed together.

The first of these reasons is based on psychological and experimental evidence which we will not take time here to discuss. To the second we devote the remainder of this article; for the restrictions implied in it are so stringent that beyond a certain point, and that, too, far short of what is adequate, they render school provision useless. If there was a free high school established in every square of a city, still, higher education would fail to form the minds of the large majority.

It could never reach the large majority. Its conditions are too selfish and exacting for that. It is not satisfied with a part, it must have the whole or nothing of the time, energies, and faculties of its pupils. This is an imperious outrage, and an assumption of supremacy which exceeds all rightful limits. From infancy to full manhood and womanhood, the pupils are cut off from all acquisitions which the school does not furnish, and these are of the nature of half-mastered text-books partly scholastic and partly nondescript. A pitiful minority is brought either by public taxation or private munificence to the end of the course, and there, enveloped with the perfume of flowers, the strains of orchestral music, and the airy phantoms of Commencement rhetoric, is pushed off the stage and into the middle of life's hurly-burly, without muscle, or buckler, or the power of self-maintenance. The "great majority," finding that there is no higher education provided for it which is in conformity with life's real conditions, retires from its pursuit, to make the best that it can of life uneducated. A wrong is here enacted; for in no system of education at the public expense, and in no institution of private endowment, designed to broaden the popular intellect, has this or any system a right to exist, if

it divorces a pupil from the acquisition or knowledge of an industry by which he must make his living. Education is for humanity, and should not be placed beyond the reach of any who aspire to it or can be induced to achieve it.

The present demand is for a division, by which one allotment of the student's time shall go to the mind school and another to the experience school. We have been trying long enough—ever since education has been extended to all classes—to make inflexible conditions of livelihood conform to an artificial and arbitrary system of teaching, and since not one out of a hundred possible candidates pursues its doubtful benefits to the final diploma, we may pronounce it a failure, and such it must be until higher education relinquishes its exclusive demands and conforms to that which cannot conform to it.

A boy or girl must "leave school" and "go to work," because neither can go to work without leaving school. The school session covers the same hours as the work session. This, although universal, is not a necessary arrangement. In the lower grades, where children divide their time between school and childish recreation, there is no objection to it, for it interferes with nothing; but for all higher grades it is most objectionable, except in purely professional schools, because it is at war with existence.

For the masses, education is not professional, and cannot be made so: it is life-nurture, and should evolve a more robust mental life for all. There is no good reason why the ministrations of school should be cut off from any at the age of fifteen or twenty years; no good reason why they should not be continued as long as the mind continues to feed. If we were as sensitive to the mind's needs as to the body's, this point would need no argument. The stomach enforces its natural demands by sanctions which no one cares to dispute. As long as it lives, it demands the ministrations of a cook and will have them; but because the mind does not gnaw, and ache, and twist itself up with pain when stuffed or starved, it is school-stuffed for ten years more or less and school-starved for the remainder of life. When the stuffing is on it is absolute, and when it is cut off the starvation is equally so, and thus, before mental life has fairly begun in best earnest, the last examination has been passed, and all systematic feeding is suddenly cut off; thereafter the aspirant may browse along the highways, like an ownerless animal. Intellectual orders should be as universal on the plateaus of life as on its upward slopes. In all grades of childhood there should be an equitable division of opportunities for school and play, while for youth, and reaching as far into maturity as may be desired, systematic study, with the aid of instructors, should be made coexistent and move abreast with industrial pursuit, rather than tandem as at present.

In carrying out this idea, a new type of college or university must arise for the people. It may be based on public or private foundations, or on both. It should embody the best grades of ability, it should be clothed with the highest dignities of culture, and it should reach to the summits of education; but its courses, instead of covering four or six years, should be made extensible to ten or twenty years, or a lifetime,

according to individual time or opportunity. The exclusive mid-day session or mid-day lectures in such an institution would necessarily be inadmissible. The hours of instruction and study must be taken from those not demanded for business or toil. The general diploma must be made attainable in parts, grade by grade and branch by branch, instead of a whole as now.

The ascent may be long, but the steps should be made easy, and every step upward marked by official recognition. Small acquisitions must be provided for in the scheme, and duly accredited. His university grade book should be as well adapted to the possibilities of the modest aspirant as is his savings-bank account, and made a twin with it. Where would be the thrift of the country, its business solidity, and the respectability of its millions, if there were no bank certificates for less than a thousand dollars? But there are no letters of credit in education which do not cost double that sum in time or money. Our banking system, moreover, rates everybody; those who have not bank accounts, by the absence of them, with as much certainty as those who have, by the dimensions of them. A society university open to all would just as truly rate each individual in an intellectual sense, and promote better standards of social distinctions.

Is it a vagary or nonsense to look for a better when a system of education has conspicuously failed to meet and cannot amplify so as to cover the wants of younger generations? and have we not a right to say that a higher education, which educates one person illegitimately and leaves the ninety-and-nine uneducated, is unsuitable to the very core of its organizations and methods? Our colleges and high schools are reservoirs of instruction, walled in by restrictions of arbitrary and predetermined form. We gather the higher waters of culture into them, and then say to the grain and trees of the surrounding plain, Come up here and refresh yourselves. Can the grain and trees drag their roots from the soil in which they grow? Of course not. Could they live anywhere but in soil? Of course not. And yet a tree can live with its roots in the air as easily as the human race can live with its roots separated from the soil of its industries. We do not need reservoirs for education: we need canals of irrigation. Pull away the dams, and let the healing waters flow in streams, which shall ramify from exalted mind, through all the soil of man's nourishment and endeavor.

It may be nothing more than "the baseless fabric of a vision" which we seem to see in the future,—a mere cloud-picture, like that which deceives the desert traveller with the semblance of spires and roofs and minarets; or it may be something real, suggested by what is now taking place, and by known laws which the atoms obey when they crystallize out of the intangible depths of human want. Be it what it may, we seem to see in the solution of a momentous problem, and growing out of the agitation incident thereto, a society university, in which art and science shall flourish on co-ordinated terms with labor.

The signs of the times are unmistakable, and they all point to the result indicated. Evening schools are now a permanent feature of

public education, and show a rapid growth. Institutes, privately endowed or maintained by subscription, for evening classes and for lectures in science and arts, are common everywhere. Library associations and lyceums are working in the same field. The Chautauquan University, founded less than ten years ago, has an enrolment of one hundred thousand members, who are making the most of life's odd hours and moments by gathering concertedly the best thoughts of the world. Social clubs for home study are yearly organized; and to such a degree has the interest deepened in this mode of mental activity, that some of the chartered universities show signs of a tendency to grow downward into the soil of humanity as well as continually upward into the cloud-mists of reputation and empyreal glory. They have issued prescribed courses of study, making the students who take them at home, in a special sense, members of the university, and have appointed a kind of examination itinerancy to gather up the results and establish promotions. The first wave of the "university extension" movement has reached us from England, for during the present summer a society for the "extension of university teaching" has been organized in Philadelphia and a council of fifty appointed to promote it on the English plan. It begins its work during the present autumn, and promises to be the most interesting step yet taken in the line indicated by this paper.

Schools of manual training are institutions of to-day. A few years ago no one thought of them as facts, but facts they are now, and likely to be significant ones. We believe in them and in their capabilities of usefulness; but we believe more in the power of the need that has called them into being than we do in the schools themselves. The sentiment by which these schools have been begotten, and which is destined to multiply and nourish them, is a feeling that existing schools are inadequate for life's uses and hold their pupils too remote from life's industries and powers; the idea emphasized is that in some way knowledge and skill must be made co-attainable, and, if it is not possible at present for a youth to be making his place in the industrial world while attending school, then he must be so schooled as to give him the vantage-arm when the struggle for place shall come.

Evidences are cumulative that methods of education are in process of incubation which shall put an end to the arbitrary severance of a person from school studies and instruction because he assumes the task of self-support. What they suggest amounts to more than a probability that the present experiments in education, made coexistent with industry, shall extend, develop, and harden into a system of academic privileges of recognized character and solidity for everybody.

The difficulties in the way of such development are those peculiar to all readjustments of methods to changed conditions. Conditions are constantly changing, so gradually and silently, so ceaselessly growing away from what is, towards that which is to be, that institutions are forever out of adjustment. Reformers, in seeking new adjustments, are more afflicted with a sensitiveness of the needs of reform than with the shrewdness to perceive and the genius to execute what the new adjustments require. Sometimes much change is required, sometimes only a

very little; for the real significance of reform is seen not so much in its departure from old methods as in the adaptation of methods to new conditions.

Reform is not the whittling of an old model into a new shape merely; it is the cutting of new models out of old ones, after the drafts of new thoughts and needs, whether the cutting be much or little. Reforms are not of necessity revolutionary or destructive. It is only the needed reform too long delayed that produces disaster; and happy is that people who by eternal vigilance keeps its institutions closely adjusted to its conditions and needs. Is it not evident that education is now far out of adjustment with life? Does not the mad race of children through the schools and out of them completely, before they have begun to do anything useful in life, indicate it? Is it not a long way out of adjustment, when there is such incompatibility between the two that school life must end before industrial life can begin? Is not the cruel straining of immature faculties in the brief period of childhood evidence of it, when those same things which nauseate the child with meaningless verbiage might otherwise be made the recreation of maturer years? Does not the fact that less than eight per cent. of all school-children finish the grammar-school course show how slight is the connection between school and the real intellectual life of the masses? Does not the rapid growth of evening schools and special devices and manual training schools for the education of workers, affirm it?

Granted that these and other evidences justify the feeling shared by thousands, that the adjustments of higher education and industry are not what they should be, can anything be done to make them better? Not only can there be, but there assuredly must be, if our social and political institutions continue to grow. It is only a question whether educational methods shall be kept moving harmoniously with life's requirements, or, by leaving things to set themselves right, be dragged along far in the rear with destructive snaps and jerks.

Something like this appears to me to be the outgrowth of present tendencies and the dictate of growing necessities: in every city and centre of population, a system of education, in the first place rationally reformed in the lower grades by methods made sympathetic with the powers of children, and topped out in a very different manner from the present. Instead of one or two high schools, driven in the old scholastic circles, a large number of schools or colleges appear, not built together for architectural effect, but variously located in situations accessible from all parts. Each of these appears as a distinct school, with its own grades and classes, its own government and officers and methods, and yet all interwelded into a university system, governed as a whole by a council or board of regents. Upon every one of its buildings I see written UNIVERSITY, and beneath this, on one building, "School of Commerce," on another "History and Political Science," on another "Language and Literature," and on others "Manual Training," "Mathematics," "Chemistry," "Engineers and Architects," "Physics and Astronomy," "Biology," "Pedagogics," "Geology and Mining," "Drawing and Ornament," "Electrical

Science," etc. The several elements of the system are contractible and extensible according to need, and to a certain extent transferable from section to section. Their courses begin very low down, and advance by easy grades through a correspondingly long series. Among these schools, a person may go where he will, and accomplish one grade or many successively in the same school, as his needs, tastes, or aptitudes may prompt; but everywhere he sees avenues of culture open before him which he may pursue through life, instead of brief courses surcharged with much that he cares nothing for, which must be completed as a whole before he is permitted to earn his bread, and end when his best powers begin to live.

In the early hours of the day, when the mill-wheels are whirling, and the roar of the street is on, the instructors will have their leisure, and but few to teach; but toward evening and at night, when everything has grown silent in the hives of labor and all is dark in the temples of money, the university life of a great community will be glowing in a thousand lights.

In the illumination which is diffused by these sanctuaries of thought and action, we may see the condition of mankind in a transforming process, and the slow steps of civilization quickened. We may see genuineness taking the place of mere pretence, and those who bear the appearance of culture as a mere gloss—a poor covering for the weakness of their faculties—working culture into the fibre of their being instead; a new social enjoyment created, contesting with the theatre, social frivolities, and vicious pleasures, for the leisure hours of life.

We may all be firm believers in the doctrine of total depravity, so long as the gates of degradation are thrown wide open when the shops close, and the fountains of intellectual life become dry before sunset. Sentiments and tastes grow in the gardens of leisure, and, with most people, are largely night-blooming flowers. They determine what the pleasures of life shall be; they determine character; they determine also heredity. The hours of man's cessation from labor are the hours of his free moral agency; then his personal choices lead him; then comes the elevation of his sentiments or the degradation of his sensations. Here our university meets him just where he stands invested with the perilous freedom of his inclinations; here Wisdom confronts him with "ways of pleasantness and paths of peace," unto which he may be drawn by his associations, or by his own longings, until gracious tastes are formed. Let those who would improve the race provide for its leisure; its industry will guard itself: the spirit of mischief does not waste much time with a man when the man is busy.

In such a university, the way would be open for the training of faculties in the line of their natural activities. Can anything be worse than the taking of fifty different temperaments, with modes of action quite different, and bending them on the same wheel, and requiring them to do exactly the same thing in exactly the same way, and scoring as blockheads those to whom the thing and the way are not natural? If a committee should be appointed to draft a scheme for promoting delusion, a person cannot conceive of their ability to report

a more effective one than the system of recitation and examination estimates in vogue.

The particular delusion in this case is the supposition that school success is a prophecy of life's success; and a great deal of respect is prepaid for promissory ability which is never redeemed at maturity. School demands are fashioned so unlike life's demands that the fulfilment of one has but little to do with the other.

Healthy ambitions are in the line of life's achievements, sound respect is paid to the same, and school achievements taken from the recitation records are exalted, because erroneously supposed to be in the same line. They ought to be, but they are not. It is this fact which has made our ears so familiar latterly with the names of a half-dozen or more apostles of educational reform, whose spirits now pervade the earth after their bodies have fallen to dust. The mere ghosts of some men are brighter than the luminosity of a whole generation of flesh and blood. The spirit forms of these men are visibly brooding over our school systems and watching the long lines which slowly sway and swing to the echoes of the call they made in life for an education that should educate the actual powers of humanity unto actual uses.

The baby, when first opening his eyes upon the world, appears to be able to do nothing but wail and wonder. The wail is numerously attested, the wonder seems to be. By seeing and hearing, he learns faces and voices; by sitting, he learns to sit upright; by walking and talking, to walk and talk. Everything that calls some new faculty into exercise gives him pleasure until the art is mastered. His play is a mastery of new toys which, to him, yield curious effects. He revels in his achievements until school life begins, and that he does not like a bit. Why not keep the development, begun in early babyhood and relished in childhood, right along through school? There is nothing there to be acquired, or should not be, that is foreign to experience; nothing that should not awaken the joy of conscious power. The answer is obvious. Children must be put through the sublime categories of learning while their bones are soft and they are too young to work.

If schools were brought into parallelism with life, instead of being made introductory to it, most of the objections which exist would no longer possess validity. The energy employed could then do useful work, instead of wasting itself against the resistances created by irrational velocities. There would then be time for the mind to acquire, and to appropriate what it acquired symmetrically; its ideas would take the form of orderly crystallizations, rather than fall into chaotic residuum from hasty boiling.

Time is a factor which cannot be eliminated from any vital or dynamical process, and there is not time within the first dozen, fifteen, or twenty years of existence for training the mental faculties of men and women to the extent attempted; consequently, vast sums are wasted yearly in futile driving. High rates of speed are always obtained by an enormous outlay of power. If a ship is driven through the water at the rate of twenty miles per hour, doubling the fuel might send her

forward a mile or two faster, but a thousand tons of coal consumed in her furnaces could not double her speed: its power would be wasted merely in churning up the sea.

We have been trying the little experiment of driving mental faculties along four or five times as fast as is natural for them to move against their resistances. We have adopted this unnatural velocity, with its attendant friction, frothing, and hubbub, because people must work, and school must end before work begins. The cost of the experiment has been prodigious.

According to statistics from the National Bureau of Education for the year 1888, the capital employed by institutions conferring degrees, in pulling about twelve thousand graduates through an average course of thirty months, is, in round numbers, two hundred and eighty-five million dollars. Secondary schools, so far as reported, raise this sum to three hundred and forty million dollars, and the public-school system runs it up to two thousand seven hundred million dollars. Considering that much was not reported to the Bureau, we may fairly assume that the education of the country requires for its maintenance a round two billion eight hundred million dollars. Of this, fully twenty-one hundred million dollars, or three-fourths of the whole, is applied to mind less than fourteen years of age, and practically none of it to mind over twenty-five years of age, since only a few older than that may be found, as stragglers or belated ones, in the professional schools and in schools for freedmen.

Think of it! Twenty-eight hundred millions of capital in education and none of it available to any one after the limits of youth are passed! Much of it wasted in untimely efforts to force the minds of children against the unyielding resistances of immaturity. None of it, or anything else, applied to keeping up intellectual momentum in later years. All of it concentrated in the initial propulsion with which youth are fired, like cannon-balls, into the face of destiny.

Is it any wonder that failure is so conspicuous, when school is a thing long passed from a person at the time when his sense and judgment begin to mature? Would it not be well to turn some of that force against the objective resistances of life's environment, instead of wasting it against the subjective resistances of childhood? Would it not be well to devise some means for keeping up the activities that can, at best, be awakened only in youth? Is it not time to consider, seriously, methods by which the faculties which are sprouted in the morning may be watered and kept green, rather than be left to wither unrefreshed beneath life's scorching mid-day suns? Finally, let no one pronounce against the feasibility of a move in this direction because a complete scheme cannot be evolved or put into action in a year or a lifetime. Not one, but many generations must fall in the wilderness before any goal of glorious promise is reached. Evolution is a slow process. Nature ordains her types a long time before they are realized. Nearly a thousand years ago, England needed a school for the education of clergy and law-givers. It was established, and a long line of graves showed where son slept with sire in death, while it was still diminutive; but to-day that university, founded by no one knows whom, sits in a

thousand seats on two continents. New universities, like the Johns Hopkins or the University of California, are as old as Oxford or Cambridge. The white locks of age lie over their new-born brows. They are new only in the sense that houses are new which are built from quarries of the eternal hills and in accordance with architectural principles that are as old as the hills themselves.

> Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,
> And but little thought was theirs of the silent antique years,
> In the building of their nest.

Let us be wiser than the birds in this respect, and, knowing that nothing of great or lasting importance can be started *de novo* and perfected in a single term of the human series, be moved to set in the world the correctives of great abuses and the potentials of great blessings, and be content with that privilege, even if the wrong shall not be subdued, nor the blessing fully unfolded, until after the rise and fall of many generations.

Posterity has a right to claim even greater things of us than those for which we thank our ancestry. A century ago, the idea of educating every man's child was a stupendous vagary, but some one was just dreamer enough to think it, and others were courageous enough to hold the ideal fast and steady until it materialized and became a sanctifying fact.

To-day, a university system which gathers society within its walls, and sends the direct influence of its power daily into the mature vigors of life and labor, may be only an ideal, but if the regnancy of mind shall rule the future, and reason wear the purple, if thought and labor are destined to guard the throne on either side, then Education and Labor must walk hand in hand throughout the world.

*Sydney T. Skidmore.*

RETURN TO the circulation desk of any
University of California Library
or to the
NORTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
Bldg. 400, Richmond Field Station
University of California
Richmond, CA 94804-4698

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS
2-month loans may be renewed by calling
(415) 642-6233
1-year loans may be recharged by bringing books
to NRLF
Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days
prior to due date

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

NRLF PHOTOCOPY MAR 31 '89

JUL 31 1998
APR 26 2001
FEB 10 2005

U. C. BERKELEY LIBRARIE
C054900113